

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 SY-04 EUR-12 NIC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MMS-01 A-01 ARAE-00

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P R 281900Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9168

INFO AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 0201

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, HA

SUBJECT: DUVALIER PARDONS 26 POLITICAL PRISONERS

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. LOCAL MEDIA ANNOUNCED OVER WEEKEND THAT PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER HAD GRANTED FULL PARDON TO 26 POLITICAL PRISONERS. NEWSPAPER PANORAMA SAID PARDONING REAFFIRMED DUVALIER'S POLICY OF DENTE AND RECONCILIATION, WHICH HAS ASSURED TRU PEACE AND ECONOMIC GAINS. THE ONLY PROMINENT PERSON AMONG THE 26 IS JEAN BERNADEL, FORMER DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA'S BRANCH IN HAITI.

2. THE PARDONING ORDER, DATED JAN. 22 (THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF DUVALIER'S PUBLIC SELECTION BY HIS FATHER, DR. FRANCOIS DUVALIER, TO SUCCEED HIM AS PRESIDENT) OBSERVED THAT QUOTE ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF GREAT HISTORIC DATES, IT IS PROPER TO EXALT THE MOST GENEROUS CONCEPTS OF THE NATION. CONSIDERING THAT THE RIGHT OF PARDON, ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHIEF OF STATE, IS A MODE OF EXERCISING THIS GENEROSITY; CONSIDERING THAT IN VIEW OF GIVING THE HISTORIC DATE OF JAN. 22, 1975 THIS SOLEMN SIGNIFICANCE, THE CHIEF OF STATE HAS DECIDED TO GRANT CLEMENCY IN FAVOR OF CERTAIN PERSONS CONDEMNED FOR POLITICAL

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REASONS. END QUOTE.

3. THE NAMES OF THE RELEASED PRISONERS, AS PRINTED IN LE NOUVELLISTE DATED JANUARY 25-26, ARE:

SERGE BENOIT
BEAUVOIS CELAMY
JEAN-CHARLES HARRY
WILSON J. VIRGELIN
JEANNOT CHERY
ST.-LOUIS VOLTAIRE
RODRIQUE ZAMOR
LUMENES OLIVIER
JEAN BERNADEL
DALUS JOSEPH
ROOSEVELT MILORD
JOSEPH RENE GELIN
JACQUES DUVERT
JUSTIN ALEXIS
RENE DUVERGER
NESTOR ELIE
MERTYLE OLIVIER
GUILLAUME FRAXE
WILSON HAIS
JOSEPH JEAN
DORLEAN EXIL
ALFRED RODRIGUE
ADRIEN FRANCOIS
SAUREL LABISSIERE
FRANCISQUE ERIC
FELIX BIEN-AIME

END UNCLASSIFIED - BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL

4. IN ADDITION TO BERNADEL, WHO WAS ARRESTED IN AUG. 1972 FOR HIS ALLEGED ROLE IN A SUBVERSIVE PLOT (PAUP 1415 OF JULY 24, 1974), AN INITIAL FILE CHECK INDICATES THAT ONLY TWO, PERHAPS THREE, OF THE RELEASED PRISONERS WERE KNOWN TO THIS POST:

A. J. VIRGELIN WILSON (OUR RECORDS GIVE WILSON AS FAMILY NAME) WAS AN ENLISTED MAN IN COAST GUARD BELIEVED TO HAVE
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BEEN ARRESTED IN OR BEFORE 1969 FOR ALLEGED COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES.

B. JACQUES DUVERT WAS ARRESTED ON FEB. 10, 1969 FOR ALLEGED COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES.

C. "GUILLAUME FRAXE" POSSIBLY COULD BE DR. FRITZ GUILLAUME, WHO WAS LISTED AS BEING MEMBER CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF OUT-

LAWED PARTIE UNIFIE COMMUNISTE D'HAITI (PUCH).

5. PANORAMA EDITORIAL ON SUBJECT, DESPITE TEXT OF PARDON, STATED THAT RELEASED PRISONERS WERE BOTH POLITICAL AND COMMON LAW. IF TRUE, THIS MIGHT EXPLAIN WHY MANY NAMES ARE UNKNOWN. WE ARE SEEKING TO ELICIT FURTHER INFORMATION ON RELEASED POLITICAL PRISONERS.

6. ASIDE FROM 12 POLITICAL PRISONERS RELEASED IN JJD. 1973 IN EXCHANGE FOR KIDNAPPED U.S. AMBASSADOR KNOW, LAST PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OF PARDONS WERE OF 72 PRISONERS ON DEC. 19, 1972 AND OF 89 PRISONERS ON NOV. 28, 1972.

7. COMMENT: THE PARDON REFLECTS GOVERNMENT'S GROWING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE STEPS THAT IMPLICITLY REPUDIATE HARSH METHODS OF DUVALIER PERE. AT TIME OF REVIVED CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE BY GOVERNMENTS RECEIVING U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, PARDON IS HELPFUL MOVE. WE BELIEVE DECISION IS RESPONSIVE TO QUIET TALKS AMBASSADOR HAS HAD ON THIS SUBJECT OVER PAST SEVERAL MONTHS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BRUTUS, WHO HAS SHOWN HIMSELF CONSISTENTLY SENSITIVE TO, AND CONCERNED TO CORRECT, HAITI'S "IMAGE" PROBLEM IN U.S. MOREOVER, PRESIDENT DUVALIER WAS USEFULLY MADE AWARE OF CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN POLITICAL PRISONER ISSUE DURING VISITS TO HAITI IN 1974 OF SENATORS PELL AND BROOKE. LATTER, IN HIS REPORT TO APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, REFERRED TO ISSUE AS MAJOR UNRESOLVED PROBLEM AND CITEN CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO AMNESTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, PRESIDENT DUVALIER ORDERED BROOKE REPORT TO BE CIRCULATED TO ALL GOH CABINET MEMBERS.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: SINCE BERNADEL WAS ONE OF THOSE ABOUT WHOM INOUEY COMMITTEE REQUESTED INFORMATION FOLLOWING HEARINGS JULY 23, 1974, DEPT. WILL WISH TO INFORM COMMITTEE OF HIS RELEASE. REQUEST CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT SENATOR BROOKE ALSO BE INFORMED OF GOVERNMENT'S ACTION. ISHAM

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